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1996/03/15

ERRORS= n/a

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TAGS= PREL, PINR, PGOV, TW, CH

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PTQ4201

DEPARTMENT OF STATE IM/IPS/CR/IR ⁽¹⁾ Date: 10 Jul 97
☐ RELEASE ☐ DECLASSIFY
☒ EXCISE ☒ DECLASSIFY EO Citations
☐ DENY IN PART

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ACTION EAP-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-10 ACDE-00 AIT-03 CIAE-00 OASY-00 DOEE-00
ANHR-01 SRPP-00 FBIE-00 H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 L-01
ADS-00 M-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OMB-01 PA-00 PM-00
PRS-00 P-00 SP-00 TRSE-00 USIE-00 SA-01 PMB-00
DRL-09 G-00 /028W

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P 151054Z MAR 96
FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1025
INFO USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU
AIT TAIPEI 0187
AMCONSUL SHENYANG
AMCONSUL SHANGHAI
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
SECDEF WASHDC
AMCONSUL CHENGDU

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 008278

E.O. 12958: DECL: (1.6XX5, X6)
TAGS: PREL, PINR, PGOV, TW, CH
SUBJECT: NATIONALISM STRONG FACTOR IN CHINA'S TAIWAN
STANCH

REFS: 95 BEIJING 33515

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EXCISE

F-41

2-21

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1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT. CLASSIFIED BY W. A. STANTON, POLMINCOUNS. REASON: 1.5 (B), (D).

2. SUMMARY: A STRONG SENSE OF NATIONALISM AMONG POLITICAL ELITES IN BEIJING IS UNDERPINNING CHINA'S TOUGH STANCE ON TAIWAN. RECENT CONTACTS WITH INTELLECTUALS IN CHINA'S TOP THINK TANKS AND THE PARTY SCHOOL REVEAL THE DEEP EMOTIONS STIRRED BY CURRENT CROSS-STRAIT TENSIONS. EVEN WHILE ADMITTING THAT SABRE-RATTLING COULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, THESE CONTACTS BELIEVED THAT CHINA SHOULD STRIKE BACK AT THE ALLEGED INDEPENDENCE TENDENCY OF LEE TENG-HUI. THE DEMONIZATION OF LEE TENG-HUI IN THE CHINESE PRESS CONTINUES, AND THE CHINESE PEOPLE ARE BEING TOLD THAT THE TAIWAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CONSTITUTES A FORM OF "FAKE" DEMOCRACY THAT IS A TOOL TO PROMOTE TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE. END SUMMARY.

3. DURING THE COURSE OF RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH CHINESE INTERLOCUTORS ON OTHER TOPICS, OUR CONTACTS INVARIABLY RAISED THE TAIWAN ISSUE AND CHINA'S MILITARY EXERCISES IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT. WE REPORT BELOW THE COMMENTS OF RESEARCHERS AT INFLUENTIAL THINK TANKS AND AT THE CENTRAL PARTY SCHOOL WHERE CHINA'S SENIOR LEADERS RECEIVE TRAINING.

DEPRESS THE NUMBERS

4. CHINA INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS (CICIR) RESEARCHER
(PROTECT) TOLD POLOFF MARCH 13 THAT THE PURPOSE
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OF CHINESE MISSILE TESTS OFF THE COAST OF TAIWAN AND OF MILITARY EXERCISES IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT WAS TO DECREASE LEE TENG-HUI'S MARGIN OF VICTORY IN THE MARCH 23 TAIWAN

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PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. [] SAID THAT, AT THIS POINT, WHETHER OR NOT LEE WON WAS IRRELEVANT. AND CHINA KNEW THAT IT COULD NOT KEEP HIM FROM WINNING. WHAT CHINA WANTED TO DO HAS TO FRIGHTEN PRO-INDEPENDENCE FORCES ON TAIWAN AND FORCE LEE TO BE MORE CIRCUMSPECT IN HIS BEHAVIOR AFTER THE ELECTION. [] ALSO SAID THAT CHINA WAS FULLY AWARE THAT THE MISSILE EXERCISES COULD HAVE A COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AFFECT AND ACTUALLY BOLSTER SUPPORT FOR LEE. BUT HAD "TAKEN THAT INTO CONSIDERATION." [] SAID THAT, FOR CHINA, THERE WAS TOO MUCH AT STAKE NOT TO TAKE A STRONG STAND.

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NO OTHER CHOICE

5. CHINA ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE (CASS) RESEARCHER [] (PROTECT) TERMED CHINA'S DECISION TO LAUNCH MISSILES NEAR TAIWAN "FULL OF RISK." NEVERTHELESS, HE SAID THAT CHINESE LEADERS BELIEVED THAT THEY HAD NO OTHER CHOICE. [] EXPLAINED THAT THE TAIWAN ISSUE, WHICH TOUCHED ON SOVEREIGNTY CONCERNS AND SAFEGUARDING CHINA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, WAS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE. ESPECIALLY AT THIS TIME. CHINA WAS CURRENTLY IN A PERIOD OF RAPID ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND STRONG NATIONALISM, SIMILAR TO EUROPE IN THE LAST CENTURY. CHINA WAS GROWING STRONGER ECONOMICALLY AND BECOMING MORE MODERN, AND THE CHINESE BELIEVED THEIR COUNTRY DESERVED THE RESPECT OF OTHER NATIONS. THE CHINESE, [] CONTINUED, WOULD

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TOLERATE NEITHER TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE NOR FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN WHAT THEY PERCEIVED AS AN INTERNAL CHINESE AFFAIR. IN ADDITION, SIMILAR TO "MANIFEST DESTINY" FOR AMERICANS OF THE LAST CENTURY, [] CALLED REUNIFICATION FOR THE CHINESE PART OF THE "MARCH OF HISTORY." LEE'S ATTEMPTS TO PROMOTE TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE POSED A DANGER TO CHINA, AND EVEN MORE SO, TO THE PEOPLE ON TAIWAN.

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THE DEMON LEE

6. ONE CHARACTERISTIC OF OFFICIAL CHINESE COMMENTS ON THE

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TAIWAN ISSUE SINCE LAST SUMMER HAS BEEN THE DEMONIZATION
OF LEE TENG-HUI. PAINTING LEE AS A VILLAIN RESPONSIBLE
FOR PROMOTING TA
IWAN INDEPENDENCE, "TWO CHINAS" OR "ONE
CHINA. ONE TAIWAN" HAS ALLOWED THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT TO
DISTINGUISH LEE (BAD) FROM ORDINARY PEOPLE ON TAIWAN
(GOOD) WHO. THE CHINESE CLAIM. STILL LONG FOR PEACEFUL
REUNIFICATION. DURING A MARCH 13 DISCUSSION, CENTRAL

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PARTY SCHOOL PROFESSOR []

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ECHOED OFFICIAL STATEMENTS LAYING THE BLAME FOR THE
CURRENT TAIWAN PROBLEM ON LEE TENG-HUI. [] ALLEGED THAT
LEE'S KMT HAS DIFFERENT FROM THE KMT OF CHIANG KAI-SEEK
OR HIS SON CHIANG CITING-KUO. UNDER THE CHIANGS, []
CLAIMED, IT HAS ILLEGAL TO OPENLY SUPPORT INDEPENDENCE IN
TAIWAN AND PRO-INDEPENDENCE ACTIVISTS WERE KEPT UNDER
WRAPS. LEE, BY CONTRAST, ALLOWED "SPLITTISTS" TO
CAMPAIGN AND OPENLY OPERATE, THEREBY REVEALING HIS TRUE
COLORS.

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7. [] FURTHER ASSERTED THAT THE TAIWAN ELECTIONS WERE A
TOOL TO PROMOTE TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE, AND THAT LEE
TENG-HUI'S DEMOCRACY HAS "FAKE." IT HAS LEE WHO HAD
CHANGED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MAINLAND AND TAIWAN,
ACCORDING TO [] AND IT HAS LEE WHO HAS LIMITING THE
POSSIBILITY FOR FURTHER CONTACT BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES OF
THE TAIWAN STRAIT. [] SAID THAT CHINA VALUED ITS
RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES BUT WOULD NOT TOLERATE
U.S. INTERFERENCE ON THE TAIWAN ISSUE OR TAIWAN
INDEPENDENCE.

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COMMENT

8. THE COMMENTS SUMMARIZED ABOVE ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF

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THE KINDS OF ARGUMENTS WE HAVE BEEN HEARING FROM MEMBERS OF THE BEIJING INTELLECTUAL ELITE IN RECENT WEEKS AND DAYS. IT IS SIGNIFICANT TO NOTE THAT THESE INTERLOCUTORS OFTEN ADMIT THAT THEIR ARGUMENTS ARE SOMETIMES NOT ENTIRELY LOGICAL. IN FACT, WE HAVE BECOME USED TO HEARING ADMISSIONS THAT OUR CONTACTS KNOW THEY ARE
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"SPEAKING FROM THE HEART" IN DEFENDING THE LEADERSHIPS' TOUGH ATTITUDE. THE PARTY SCHOOL'S [REDACTED] WHO JOINED THE CCP AS A TEENAGER AND FOUGHT AGAINST BOTH THE JAPANESE AND THE KMT, WAS PARTICULARLY STRIDENT IN INFORMING US THAT NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY CONCERNS WERE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO HIM. THE STRONG VISCERAL REACTION TO THE PERCEIVED THREAT TO CHINA'S SOVEREIGNTY REPRESENTED BY LEE TENG-HUI CERTAINLY CONFIRMS THAT -- AT LEAST AMONG POLITICAL ELITES -- NATIONALISM IS AN EXTREMELY POTENT FORCE. SASSER

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